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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SSM-03 EB-08 AID-05
HA-05 AF-10 OES-07 DOE-11 SOE-02 DOEE-00 SSO-00
NRC-05 /153 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8276
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 02826

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, UR, SY
SUBJECT: JOINT SOVIET-SYRIAN COMMUNIQUE

REF: MOSCOW 2636

SUMMARY: SOVIET-SYRIAN COMMUNIQUE AND AIRPORT DEPARTURE COMMENTS BY ASAD INDICATE DISTINCT SATISFACTION WITH VISIT BY BOTH SOVIET AND SYRIAN SIDES. ON SURFACE ASAD
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SEEMS TO HAVE TRADED WORDS FOR ARMS. WHILE END RESULT OF THIS MAY BE DEBATABLE, IMMEDIATE POLITICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL GAIN WILL ACCRUE TO SOVIET UNION WHICH HAS ONCE AGAIN INDICATED THAT ITS ARMS SUPPLY ROLE ENTITLES IT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY IN M.E. END SUMMARY.

1. FEB. 24 PRAVDA CARRIES JOINT SOVIET-SYRIAN COMMUNIQUE

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AND TASS ARTICLE ON ASAD'S AIRPORT DEPARTURE REMARKS.
IN HIS COMMENTS TO TASS REPORTER, ASAD SAID THAT SOVIET-SYRIAN DISCUSSIONS ARE PLANNED FOR "IMMEDIATE FUTURE" ON SPECIFIC QUESTIONS OF FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF BILATERAL COOPERATION IN FORTHCOMING YEARS. HE ALSO LABELED MOSCOW MEETING AS "EXCEPTIONALLY SUCCESSFUL AND FRUITFUL". THIS POSITIVE CHARACTERIZATION IS BORNE OUT BY TONE AND CONTENT OF JOINT COMMUNIQUE ALTHOUGH IT IS OBVIOUS THAT TWO SIDES DISAGREED ON EVENTS IN HORN.
2. COMMUNIQUE IS NOTEWORTHY ON FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. IN LANGUAGE WHICH IS LESS VAGUE AND EUPHEMISTIC THAN USUAL, TWO SIDES DISCUSSED AND PLANNED ("NAMETILI") MEASURES FOR FURTHER RAISING LEVEL OF SYRIAN "DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY". IN THIS SPECIFIC CONTEXT, SYRIA PRAISED SOVIET SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO ARABS "ESPECIALLY AT THIS STAGE". OTHER REFERENCES IN COMMUNIQUE WERE MADE TO POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL TIES IN VARIOUS AREAS INCLUDING "MILITARY";

3. -- POLITICAL COOPERATION. IN UNUSUALLY CANDID LANGUAGE, TWO SIDES ATTACHED "FIRST-CLASS SIGNIFICANCE" TO DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL POLITICAL RELATIONS AND EXPLAINED THAT STABLE POLITICAL RELATIONS REFLECT IN A POSITIVE WAY ON BILATERAL COOPERATION IN OTHER AREAS;

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4. -- ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. LENGTHY AND GLOWING DESCRIPTION OF SOVIET ECONOMIC PROJECTS IN SYRIA EMPHASIZED LARGE SCALE OF SOVIET AID AS WELL AS CONCENTRATION ON KEY BRANCHES OF ECONOMY. AN IMPLICIT AND NEGATIVE CONTRAST WITH CURRENT STATE OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN EGYPT SEEMS EVIDENT. WHILE NO MENTION IS MADE OF SPECIFIC NEW ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR SYRIA, THIS MUST HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED DURING THE TALKS, JUDGING BY THE LINE UP OF SOVIET AND SYRIAN DELEGATIONS;

5. -- MIDDLE EAST. COMMUNIQUE DEVOTED MUCH ATTENTION TO THIS SUBJECT. AMONG THE MORE INTERESTING POINTS ARE THE FOLLOWING:

(A) TWO SIDES REJECTED POLICY OF "SEPARATE DEALS", AND CONDEMNED SEPARATE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TALKS AND "CAPITULATIONIST ACTIONS OF EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT";
B) TWO SIDES EXPRESSED "DEEP CONVICTION" THAT "CONSOLIDATION AND COORDINATION" OF ACTIONS OF ALL PROGRESSIVE FORCES WAS A DECISIVE FACTOR IN ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT;
C) SOVIET UNION, IN CONTEXT OF B) ABOVE, NOTED POSITIVE ROLE OF TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS MEETINGS IN STRENGTHENING

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SOLIDARITY AND UNITY OF ACTION OF PROGRESSIVE ARAB STATES
AND PLO IN STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND ZIONISM AND
"AGAINST SEPARATE DEALS";
D) SYRIA CONFIRMED THE NECESSITY OF SOVIET PARTICIPATION
IN M.E. SETTLEMENT AT "ALL OF ITS STAGES ON BASIS OF
APPROPRIATE UN RESOLUTIONS";
E) TWO SIDES STATED "FIRM DETERMINATION" TO CONTINUE
JOINT EFFORTS FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE AND
DURABLE SETTLEMENT ON BASIS ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM TERRI-
TORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND REALIZATION OF PALESTINIANS'
INALIENABLE NATIONAL RIGHTS (SELF-DETERMINATION, STATE-
HOOD AND VETURN TO HOMELANDS). COMMENT: EMBASSY NOTES
RETURN TO STANDARD LANGUAGE ON THIS ISSUE, IN CONTRAST
TO ASAD'S DINNER SPEECH MENTION OF PALESTINIAN STATE ON
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THEIR OWN "MOTHERLAND". END COMMENT.

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6. -- AFRICA. IN DISCUSSION ON HORN, TWO SIDES ONLY CONDEMNED "IMPERIALIST INTERFERENCE" IN REGION AND EXPRESSED "SERIOUS CONCERN" OVER EVENTS THERE;

7. -- OTHER ISSUES. SYRIANS SIGNED ON TO LENGTHY LIST OF SOVIET PROPOSALS RANGING FROM DEC. 19, 1977 UN DETENTE INITIATIVE TO CONDEMNATION OF NEUTRON BOMB.

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8. COMMENT: JUDGING FROM LANGUAGE OF COMMUNIQUE AND AIRPORT COMMENTS BY ASAD, VISIT WAS INDEED CONSIDERED SUCCESSFUL BY BOTH SIDES. SPECIFIC LANGUAGE ON MILITARY COOPERATION LEAVES LITTLE ROOM FOR DOUBT THAT EVEN GREATER LEVELS OF SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS WILL BE FORTH-COMING. ACHIEVEMENT OF THIS GOAL WAS, NO DOUBT, A PRI-MARY SYRIAN OBJECTIVE.

9. IN TURN, SOVIETS CAN ONLY BE PLEASED BY ASAD'S SIGNING ON TO:
-- HARSH AND SPECIFIC LANGUAGE DIRECTED AGAINST EGYPTIANS (COMMUNIQUE LANGUAGE STRONGLY CONTRASTS WITH RETICENCE SHOWN BY ASAD IN HIS DINNER SPEECH TO BREZHNEV - REFTEL);

-- REPEATED REFERENCES TO IMPORTANCE OF SOVIET-ARAB COOPERATION AND "COORDINATION" OF ACTIONS BY ALL PRO-GRESSIVE FORCES; AND
-- EMPHASIS ON IMPORTANCE OF SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN M.E. SETTLEMENT PROCESS "AT ALL STAGES".

10. DESPITE OBVIOUS SYRIAN MOVEMENT IN COMMUNIQUE TOWARD SOVIET POSITION, SYRIANS WILL LIKELY CLAIM THAT THEIR REAL POSITION IS REPRESENTED BY THE CAUTIOUS LANGUAGE PUT FORTH IN ASAD'S SPEECH TO BREZHNEV AND NOT IN THE FORMULATION OF THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE. FOR EXAMPLE, KNOWLEDGEABLE AL-AHRAM CORRESPONDENT IN MOSCOW, ABDEL MALEK KHALIL, POINTED OUT TO EMBOFF THAT SYRIANS PUT THEIR STATEMENT ON SOVIET PARTICIPATION "AT ALL STAGES" INTO CONTEXT OF UN RESOLUTIONS, I.E., INTO CONTEXT OF GENEVA CONFERENCE AND NOT INTO CONTEXT OF PRESENT INTER-ARAB ACTIONS. IN ADDITION, MALEK NOTED THAT ONLY SOVIET SIDE HAD PRAISED TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS

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MEETINGS AND THAT FOCUS OF ACTION OF THESE MEETINGS
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WAS SEEN IN COMMUNIQUE AS DIRECTED AGAINST IMPERIALISM
AND ZIONISM AND NOT ONLY AGAINST "SEPARATE DEALS".

11. NONETHELESS, EMBASSY IS STILL STRUCK BY SOVIET
SUCCESS IN OBTAINING SYRIAN ACQUIESCENCE TO WHAT MUST
BE PREDOMINANTLY SOVIET VERSION OF COMMUNIQUE. FOR
MOMENT, AT LEAST, ASAD VISIT WILL GO FAR TO SOOTH
WOUNDED SOVIET PRIDE CAUSED BY MOSCOW'S RELATIVE
IMPOTENCE IN M.E. MATTERS.

12. MALEK SAID ASAD DID NOT HOLD ANY BRIEFING FOR ARAB
AMBASSADORS IN MOSCOW. MALEK ALSO DID NOT BELIEVE
RUMORS THAT JALLUD HAD MET ASAD WHILE THE TWO WERE HERE.

13. ARAB RUMOR MILL IS CHURNING OUT REPORTS OF EMINENT
ARRIVAL IN MOSCOW OF PALESTINIAN DELEGATION LED BY
ARAFAT. SUCH A VISIT SEEMS PLAUSIBLE TO US, BUT WE
HAVE ONLY THESE RUMORS TO GO ON AS OF THIS WRITING.
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